



# *Milwaukee County*

## Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb, 1<sup>st</sup> District

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### **VOLUNTEERS HELP MAINTAIN ESTABROOK DAM**

*Sup. Lipscomb calls on County Executive to include dam repairs in 2010 Budget proposal*

**Milwaukee, WI** – Milwaukee County Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb is recognizing the countless hours of work put in by a number of volunteers in recent days at the Estabrook Dam. "I am grateful to the many people who stepped forward and volunteered their time or donated resources to cleanup the debris that has accumulated behind the dam for the last 15 months," Supervisor Lipscomb stated.

"Volunteers and donors have contributed more to the upkeep of the Estabrook Dam in 2009 than Milwaukee County, but now it is time for us, as owners of the dam, to step up and take responsibility for the dam repairs," Supervisor Lipscomb explained. "We must protect the health and safety of our community from potential flooding and exposure to toxins in the river soil."

Until last year, Milwaukee County cleaned up debris behind the dam on at least an annual basis. So far in 2009, however, no cleanup was completed by the Parks Department because the Administration failed to adequately budget for the work. The dam is constructed with ice breakers, commonly referred to as "dragon's teeth," that catch debris, including large logs and branches that float downriver. Without regular cleaning, the debris impairs the dam's effectiveness at controlling flooding. If the dam were ever removed, the debris would wind up downstream, damaging downtown docks and boats on its way into the harbor, where it would pose a hazard and be difficult and expensive to clean up.

Several local employers and organizations assisted in the recent cleanup effort, including volunteers from Winkel's Tree and Landscape, Inc., Second Nature Landscape, Fabco Equipment Company, Bobcat Plus and the Milwaukee River Preservation Association. Milwaukee County Parks, the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Department, and Milwaukee Police Department also supported the effort.

In particular, Wallace Tree and Landscape, Inc., of Glendale provided exceptional support by orchestrating the cleanup effort. "We worked in coordination with the County and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to accomplish the cleanup," said owner Lance Wallace. "It was important to me and my neighbors that the debris be cleaned out and the dam maintained to reduce the risk of flooding in the area."

The Estabrook Dam was constructed in 1938 as part of an extensive federal flood mitigation project. It was built by the Works Project Administration (WPA) in a massive civic effort involving thousands of laborers who blasted through rock lining the river bed using dynamite, cut a new channel through Lincoln Park, and removed a rock ledge that served as a natural dam.

"The necessity of the dam to mitigate flooding is well documented," Supervisor Lipscomb said. "It has served us well for more than 7 decades, and now it is time to preserve this important infrastructure for the benefit of Milwaukee County."

A 2009 Budget Amendment offered by Supervisor Lipscomb last year to fix the dam was stalled, but a lack of progress since that time has exacerbated the problem and drawn the ire of the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), which recently issued a new order to repair or abandon the dam. An engineering report commissioned by Milwaukee County in 2006 put the cost of a 25-year fix at less than \$800,000. More recent estimates by public works staff in 2008 suggest the cost is now \$1.4 million. Opponents of the dam continue to cling to an absurd estimate made in 2009 of up to \$12 million. Supervisor Lipscomb maintains his support for a reasonable repair and asserts that opponents of the dam are pushing the higher estimates in an attempt to derail progress toward making the needed repairs.

"I call on County Executive Scott Walker to do the responsible thing for the thousands of homeowners that are now at increased risk of flooding, and all the users and neighbors of the County parks along this section of the river. They are being exposed to toxins because of current failures to maintain and operate the dam. My message to the County Executive is to include sufficient funding for repair of the Estabrook Dam in his 2010 Capital Budget."

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